



BATTERY PORTER



Napoleons on Stony Hill

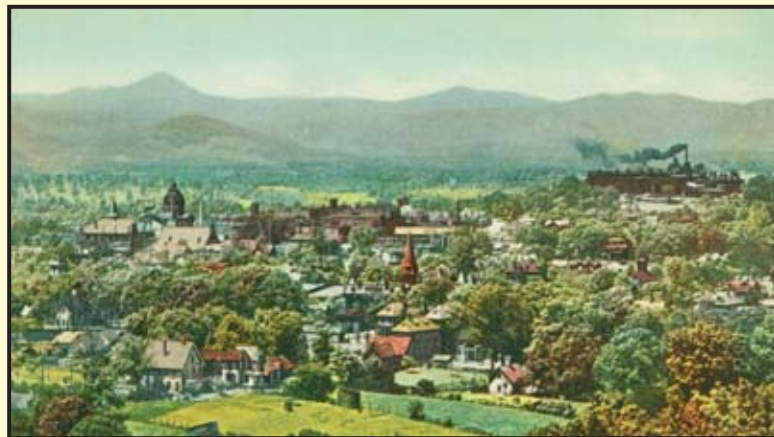


Near the end of the Civil War in 1865, Confederate Battery Porter was positioned uphill to your right on Stony Hill, at that time the highest point in Asheville. The battery included four 12-pounder field pieces known as Napoleons, a model 1857 howitzer named for the French emperor Louis Napoleon, who had promoted its development. The smoothbore cannon could fire a solid or exploding shell almost a mile. It was the workhorse artillery piece for both the Union and the Confederate armies.



Combat artist Edwin Forbes sketched this Model 1857 Napoleon in Aug. 1863. – Courtesy Library of Congress

After the April 6 Battle of Asheville, the battery was ordered to Greenville, South Carolina, but it was captured outside Hendersonville, North Carolina, on April 23. Union Gen. Alvan C.



Asheville, with Battery Park to right – Courtesy North Carolina Collection, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville

Gillem reported the capture of “4 pieces and 70 of its infantry guard,” and commended “Lt. Col. [Frederick] Slater for his distinguished gallantry in charging and capturing the enemy’s battery.” The next day, when Gillem negotiated a truce with Confederate Gen. James G. Martin, he reported that “General Martin demanded the restoration of the battery captured the preceding day, basing his claim on the fact that the capture had been made after the date of the agreement between

Generals Sherman and Johnson, though the existence might have been unknown to him and myself. Of course I declined restoring the battery.”

Gillem sent the guns back through Asheville to Greenville, Tennessee, where they arrived on April 27. Forster A. Sondley, a local resident, later wrote, “The people of Asheville had the mortification of seeing the guns of Porter’s battery that had guarded the crest of what is now Battery Park hill, just captured, driven through by [the First U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery].”



Battery Park Hotel – Courtesy North Carolina Collection, Pack Memorial Library, Asheville

Stony Hill was called Battery Porter Hill after the war, but was renamed Battery Park when a hotel opened there in 1886. E.W. Grove reduced the height of the hill by 70 feet in 1924 when he built today’s Battery Park Hotel. To envision the height of the former hill, count to the seventh floor of Battery Park Hotel.